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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 QUITO 000885

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: TENTATIVE SUPPORT FOR PALACIO

REF: A. QUITO 879

- [1](#)B. QUITO 874
- [1](#)C. QUITO 872
- [1](#)D. QUITO 871
- [1](#)E. QUITO 870

Classified By: Amb. Kristie A. Kenney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) Summary. The Embassy continues its outreach on all fronts, revealing tentative support for Palacio throughout Ecuador. Many "supporters" note that Palacio has a tough road ahead of him as public pressure mounts to hold elections soon and rid Ecuador of corruption and partisan politics. Eight ministers were sworn in today (Septel) while droves of Gutierrez appointees evacuated their offices. Congress is slated to reassemble April 26 or 27. The security situation has calmed down as the protesters have not returned to the streets today. Reports from other parts of the country indicate that all is calm and that American citizens are not being targeted. The Embassy will continue its outreach and has begun privately engaging the new administration. End Summary.

Tentative Support for Palacio

[1](#)2. (C) The Embassy continued its outreach to various sectors to gauge support for Palacio and assess what are the GOE's next steps (Consulate Guayaquil will send Septel on its efforts). Some indigenous leaders are voicing concern that Palacio is favoring the Social Christian Party (PSC) in his government. They will not participate in his government and are calling on Palacio to hold elections soon, saying that he should be in office for no more than four months, preferably one month. Jaime Nebot, the Mayor of Guayaquil, has called for a meeting of the Association of Mayors. The indigenous will send representatives and intend to call for elections. The main indigenous group (CONAIE) is meeting to consider presenting Palacio with a list of demands or calling for new elections.

[1](#)3. (C) In an April 21 meeting with DATT and MILGRP, Joint Chief VADM Rosero said that the military had considered imposing a junta but decided against it because of the political ramifications. In turn, Rosero said, the military decided to maintain a unified command throughout this ordeal in adherence to the constitution. Rosero noted that the relations between the military and police were now at a low point, due to actions taken by the police during the crisis. Specifically, he mentioned how the former Chief of Police Poveda floundered in his duties, then fled. And his replacement, Cuvero, wavered in performing his duties. Rosero said that the military supported Gutierrez until he was "no longer supportable". Now, they will support Palacio, noting that they had to go so far as to dress him in military khakis in order to rescue him from the siege of the Congress at CIESPAL. Rosero noted that this was the first time the Ecuadorian military had not seized power in this type of situation. A noteworthy milestone.

[1](#)4. (C) Democratic Left party (ID) sources have confirmed ID's support of Palacio. Cynthia Viteri of the PSC is currently the vice president of Congress. ID hopes to claim the presidency of Congress by resolution next week, to install either Wilfrido Lucero, Jorge Sanchez, Andres Paez or Guillermo Landazuri. Some members of Congress have reportedly resigned in response to events. Most, however, have stayed on and will, tentatively, reassemble on April 26 or 27.

[1](#)5. (U) The Episcopal Conference issued a statement in support of Palacio and called for peace and dialogue.

Comings and Goings

[1](#)6. (C) Eight ministers were sworn in today (see Septel for bio specifics), while Gutierrez appointees evacuated their post. All the employees from the director level up at the Ministry of Government have been asked to resign. Carlos Polit, Gutierrez' Presidency Minister, hinted to the DCM that a witch hunt might be on. He is laying low until he can hop a flight to the U.S. (he holds a U.S. passport). The former Ministers of Economy and Finance, Commerce and Labor, however, have said that they will most likely stay in Ecuador.

17. (C) Polit acknowledged that the Gutierrez government made major mistakes, most notably allowing Bucaram to return. He said he is in regular contact with Gutierrez, who he said is in relatively good spirits. Polit mentioned that Gilmar Gutierrez, the ex-President's brother, is in hiding and may also be at the Brazilian Embassy with ex-President Gutierrez and his family. Military sources confirmed the two were together when departing sanctuary at an air base near Quito for the Brazilian residence.

Security

18. (U) Providential rains continued today, helping to deter further demonstrations. There were no verified reports of protests in Quito and the city remains calm. The ENP reports that there is a slight possibility of anti-government protests tomorrow.

American Citizens

19. (U) Our wardens are reporting calm in provinces outside of Quito; no incidents have been reported against American citizens. Some Peace Corps volunteers in distant provinces had been unaware of the events transpiring in Quito until notified by us.

Next Steps

110. (U) The DCM will attend a meeting of OAS-member states with Antonio Parra, the newly-minted Minister of Foreign Affairs, late on April 21. The members of the new Cabinet have been closeted with the new President all day.

KENNEY